

## THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

### *Mass Media Week in Belarus*

*Info-posting October 29 – November 18, 2012*

**Dozens of Belarusian mass media and journalists joined the international action “Stand up for journalism” on November 5. Events dedicated to the date were held in Minsk, Brest, Luninets, Vitsebsk, Mahilou, Homel, Salihorsk, Babrusk, Hlybokaye. BAJ members, human rights defenders, readers and subscribers of independent press took part in meetings, round table discussions, and photo sessions; filed collective petitions etc.**

**The information on the action was spread in printed media and in online resources euroradio.fm, nv-online.info, nn.by, Intex-press.by, belapan.com, naviny.by, gazetaby.com, svaboda.org, mediakritika.by, ximik.info, spring96.org, charter97.org, ex-press.by, media-polesye.by, region4.by, racyja.eu, babruysk.by, babruisk.by etc.**

**On October 29** the editor of the non-state regional press *Bobruyskij Courier* **Anatol Sanatsienka** sent a **complaint to Mahilou region prosecutor’s office** demanding to **issue a warning** to the deputy chair of Babruysk City Executive Committee **Aliaksandr Markachou**. The complaint was caused by an incident that happened **on September 14** when Anatol Sanatsienka was going to an electoral picket of a democratic candidate. When he was going by a group of people, who turned out to be employees of the ideological department of Babruysk City Executive Committee and of the local KGB, the editor of “Bobruyskij Courier” heard **a threat towards him from Aliaksandr Markachou**. The situation was recorded on video camera.

**On October 30** it became known that the official website of Barysau District Executive Committee decided not to publish information on non-state regional newspaper ***Borisovskiye Novosti*** in the section on the media of the district. The section contains information about the local TV, *Telecom-Garant*, and *Svet*, and also the newspaper *Homan Barysaushchyny*. The non-state print newspaper *Borisovskiye Novosti*, which is officially registered by the Ministry of Information, was “forgotten” by the officials.

**On October 31 Baranavichy court forbid journalists to attend a trial** on a serious road accident with death casualties. The judge Stanislau Pivavar upheld the motion of the accused and his defender to remove journalists from the proceedings and asked them to leave the room. The lawyer of BAJ **Andrey Bastunets** considers that the judge violated the guaranteed rights of the journalists: the judge could either ban the media from using audio and video equipment, or announce the trial to in a closed session, although it can be made only in certain circumstances, for instance, when the matter concerns private life of its participants.

**On November 2** BAJ member, lawyer and human rights defender **Leaid Sudalenka** received an official **summons to the tax inspection** of Soviet district in Homel for November 9 “to sign a protocol and take part in an administrative process”. The administrative case was started upon Sudalenka’s refusal to file a **declaration on income**.

“The inspection does not provide confidentiality of the information. In 2008, when such information on our income was submitted, **it leaked to the media**, in particular to the state-run regional newspaper *Homelskaya Prawd*a, said Sudalenka. He is sure that the tax inspection’s interest in his income is politically motivated.

**On November 5** it became known that the ex-political prisoner **Aliaksandr Atroshchankau** – press-secretary of the ex-candidate for presidency Andrey Sannikau, an activist of the campaign

“European Belarus” – **decided not to get back to Belarus**. Now he is in Warsaw. The reason was, according to Atroshchankau, a possibility of a new arrest.

*We remind that on March 2 2011 the court of Frunzenski district in Minsk (judge Tatsiana Charkas) sentenced the journalist to four years imprisonment in a high-security colony). He was charged with participating in mass riots (art.293, part 2 of the Penal Code) on December 19, 2010 in Independence Square in Minsk. Aliaksandr Atroshchankau was detained on December 20 in his flat. Before the trial he was held in the KGB detention center. He was set free on September 14, 2011 by Lukashenka, although he did not plead for pardon.*

**On November 9** it was reported that the Australian journalist **Amos Roberts** still **did not receive back** his equipment and personal belongings confiscated by the Belarusian customs office almost two months before. A little later the journalist filed a complaint to the General prosecutor’s office. “Despite many appeals from SBS and inquiries by the Australian Embassy in Moscow, the authorities haven't explained why this happened or when my belongings will be returned,” said the journalist.

*We remind that Amos Roberts, Australian SBS TV journalist, was searched at the customs of Minsk-2 airport on September 21, 2012. Having official accreditation, he had made a report over the teddy bear case and was going to leave the country, but the customs officers decided to confiscate his equipment, including his mobile phone. The officers who made the confiscation refused to tell their names.*

**On November 11** the Belarusian journalist **Iryna Khalip**, correspondent of the Russian *Novaya Gazeta*, was **awarded with Hermann Kesten Prize**. The awarding ceremony took place in the absence of the laureate, as the journalist I sunder house arrest. At the ceremony in Darmstadt the president of the German PEN-Center **Johano Strasser** called Iryna Khalip a “courageous fighter for human rights”.

The prize of Herman Kesten, the head of the German PEN-Center of the times of national socialism, is presented annually to authors on outstanding merits in human rights sphere or to victims of political repressions.

**On November 12** on the border point “Kamenny Loh” on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border 42 albums of **Belarus Press Photo 2011** were **confiscated** from the photographers **Yuliya Darashkevich** and **Aliaksandr Vasiukovich**. According to Yuliya Darashkevich, the customs officers saw that the album contained photos and decided to check if there was any information harmful for the Belarusian state”. She says that the album has been published legally and all taxes have been paid. “We told the customs officers that all necessary documents for their import had already been in their base, but they were unable to check it”. Albums Belarus Press Photo has already been seized once: two years ago they were taken for an expertise, and given back a month later.

**On November 12** it became known that the correspondent point “**European Radio for Belarus**” had their **accreditation** in Belarus **extended** for one more year – till November 13, 2013. The ruling was signed by the first Prime Minister deputy **Uladzimir Siamashka**.

We remind that *Euroradio* has worked in Belarus since 2005, started broadcast in February 2006. The official permit was obtained in November 2009. At present 10 Euroradio journalists are accredited.

**On November 13** it became known that the ex-editor-in-chief of the magazine *Arche-Pachatak* **Valery Bulhakau decided to leave Belarus**. He says the decision was taken under pressure from the investigation. “On October 23 and 27 the Belarusian television showed reports in Zone X program that concerned me personally. The first report named me as the main figure in a

“book case”; whereas the second program stressed that the “book case” has turned into a criminal case,” said Valery Bulhakau.

*We remind that Valery Bulhakau was detained on September 14 in Hrodna at the presentation of the book “Sovetization of Western Belarus” and accused of illegal entrepreneurship. On September 24 – 28 employees of the Department of Financial Investigations seized all documents for the last two years of the publisher house where the magazine was published. On October 2 more than five thousand books from Valery Bulhakau’s personal collection were confiscated. On October 4 the founder of ARCHE Andrey Dynko was summoned to the DFI, after which Valery Bulhakau left the office of the chief editor. On October 4 the DFI blocked the account of the magazine and started to summon its employees for explanations. On October 18 Bulhakau was fined 500 thousand rubles for illegal entrepreneurship.*

**On November 17** the editorial office of **the weekly *Obozrevatel*** announced that the newspaper **stops being published** on December 28. The decision was made by the publisher, businessman Siarhei Atroshchanka out of economic reasons.